

Free ET Japan Coalition at UN Decolonization

FREE EAST TIMOR JAPAN COALITION

Statement on East Timor to the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization

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From Hideshi Kajioaka, Secretary. Presented by Kan Akatani

It is an honor to address this distinguished committee, a committee overseeing one of the most important tasks for which the United Nations was founded, the decolonization of territories under colonial rule. As the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations approaches, it is the deep-felt hope of my organization that all the territories which fall within the committee's mandate be able to exercise their right of self-determination as expeditiously as possible. Certainly in the case of East Timor, failure to achieve this goal would be a betrayal of the principles upon which the United Nations rests and a cruel denial of justice to the people of East Timor.

It is the belief of my organization that public opinion can play a positive role in support of the work of the United Nations to find a solution to the East Timor issue. Therefore, this May, the Japan Coalition invited British journalist Max Stahl to publicly report on his findings from a three-month visit to East Timor in the latter part of 1993. His findings regarding a "second massacre" in Dili after the shooting of mourners at the Santa Cruz cemetery were presented by an eye-witness at the Human Rights Commission meeting in March of this year and in "Death of a Nation," a TV documentary shown in a number of countries. will, therefore, present some conclusions from these disclosures which I believe are particularly relevant to us here today.

In contrast to the gunning down of mourners at Santa Cruz cemetery by uniformed soldiers of the Indonesian armed forces, many victims of the "second massacre" are believed to have died at the military hospital in Dili after being given powerful disinfectant, paraformaldehyde, in pill form, with the knowledge of Indonesian doctors. Two survivors described some of the symptoms that resulted from taking the pill and those symptoms were later confirmed by a specialist in London who analyzed a tablet of the exact type administered in the Dili hospital: burning sensation in the chest, dizziness, lethargy, ataxia, and coma. When death occurs, it is attributed to circulatory collapse. A Timorese lab technician who witnessed soldiers administering the pills to the wounded who lay in 'the hospital morgue, asserts that the pills could not have been released without orders from the Indonesian medical personnel. Since there is no benign medicinal use for this drug, "It is clear," said Mr. Stahl, "that the soldiers and assistants who administered them and the authorities who released them from the medical stores did not do so to help the wounded, almost certain that they believed they would kill or assist them in the process of finishing off the wounded who had been sent to the morgue." Throughout the orgy of killing and abuse of the wounded, hospital director Dr. Nyoman Winyata and a junior doctor on six months national service were in attendance in the hospital, within sight and supervising proceedings, according to the witness.

If it is possible to say, as some do, that the shooting of mourners at the cemetery was an "aberration" or an overreaction to provocation, it is certainly not possible to say the same for the action of the medical staff of the military hospital who helped to "finish off" the survivors. Mr. Stahl drew a comparison with the Nazi doctors who administered disinfectants to Jewish victims whom the doctors regarded as "vermin". One is also reminded of the Japanese doctors of the infamous "Unit 731" who felt no compunction about performing unspeakably cruel experiments on live Chinese, Russian or Korean "logs" as they called their victims.

This is not the first report of Indonesian medical personnel in East Timor collaborating in the murder of East Timorese, but time does not allow me to go into detail here. What I wish to point out is that, as with the Nazi and Japanese doctors, it is evidently a perception that the victims are essentially different from the doctors themselves that psychologically allows the doctors to collaborate in their murder. Yet when Indonesia seeks to justify its presence in East Timor, it asserts in a manner similar to the argument Imperial Japan used to justify its colonial rule in Korea and Manchuria, that the East Timorese are brothers. Hard reality gives the lie to this assertion.

Another point which should be kept in mind is that for fully two and a half years after these events, no international body has gone to the hospital to conduct an investigation. One has never heard even a

suggestion that the medical personnel involved will be brought to justice. When some reporters tried in February of this year to interview Bishop Belo about the second massacre, they were prevented from meeting him. Instead a Fr. Marcus Wanandi, an Indonesian priest whose brother has been one of the key strategists in Indonesia's invasion and occupation of East Timor, met the journalists and told them that the events described were not true.

After an excruciatingly long process, the Commission on Human Rights succeeded in sending its Special Rapporteur on Summary and Arbitrary Executions to East Timor, who I believe is there at this very moment. All concerned are to be commended for achieving this visit, but the fact that it has taken so long for even this modest step indicates the extent to which the occupying power in East Timor considers itself free to do whatever it likes to the long-suffering Timorese without fear of serious international censure. And it should be noted that the authorities have been preparing for the rapporteur's visit by, among other things, moving political prisoners from Dili to the island of Java to make sure that the Special Rapporteur does not have contact with them.

Indonesia takes pains to persuade the world that it is improving the situation of the people in East Timor, but the above examples show that as long as the East Timorese are forced to live under foreign occupation, there can be little hope for a fundamental improvement in their lot.

Distinguished Chairperson and Members of the Committee, Colonialism is an affront to the human dignity of the colonized, but as the past 19 years all too graphically show, it also brings out the worst characteristics in the colonizers. Many Indonesian people are beginning to learn about the indignities and atrocities that the East Timorese have suffered under the Indonesian occupation and are ashamed and angered. Some are speaking out against the occupation at risk to their own safety. I believe that for the majority of Indonesians the liberation of East Timor will bring to an end a very sad chapter in their country's history and be greeted with tremendous relief. In the case of South Africa, the untiring struggle over decades, led by the United Nations against the apartheid system, resulted in a victory which has ushered in an era of hope for both blacks and whites. There is no reason why the United Nations cannot achieve a similar success in East Timor if it has the will to do so.